

## #StoptheHurt-LEARN

### Program Teaches Alternatives to Violence

#### An interview with Dr. Edward Kotin

**"...the use of power and control may...destroy the love, trust, respect and ultimately the relationship itself."**

*A local model program for abusers can teach us about healthy relationships. We talked with Edward Kotin, PhD, a Licensed Psychologist and Clinical Supervisor and Lead Therapist of the Domestic Violence Prevention Program (DVPP) in Hays, Caldwell, and Comal counties.*

*When he first moved to San Marcos in 1998, he volunteered at HCWC and took an interest in programs that change an abuser's behavior. Previous intervention models based on anger management had limited impact — only a 15% effectiveness rate compared to the Duluth Model that exposes tactics of power and control with a 40% effectiveness rate. So Dr. Kotin traveled to Duluth, Minnesota to study under the*



*National Training Project and brought his new insights back to Central Texas. The following is based on Dr. Kotin's comments:*

#### **Anger is not the core of abusive behavior.**

The Duluth Model focuses on the tactics of power and control as the source of abusive behavior. Perpetrators use violence, intimidation, emotional abuse, isolation, sexual violence, exertion of privilege, coercion and threats to get their victims to do what they want. The focus of the groups is to help abusers understand that the use of power and control may help

them get what they want in the short run, but in the long term the use of those tactics will destroy the love, trust, respect of their partner and ultimately the relationship itself. The Duluth Model also stresses personal accountability.

#### **We are all 100% responsible for what we say and do.**

When the abusers say "It was her fault" or "She knows how to push my buttons," it demonstrates the lack of personal accountability for their violent actions.

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## **Violence is not effective and destroys relationships.**

The curriculum's focus is on power and control from a sociological perspective, not from a personal perspective.

## **It's common for people to use power to get what they want — that's the way the world works from the bully on the playground to business, politics, the military, etc.**

It works when you don't care about the person you are controlling, but should it surprise us that the tactics spill over in our relationships and families? In my private practice I have noticed that many couples are struggling with tactics of power and control, they are just not using violence.

Most of our abusers are court-mandated to attend DVPP group sessions. A few come because their partner threatens divorce if they do not. Over 100 abusers a year come to the program. There are five groups, and one is for women perpetrators. They are held in San Marcos, Lockhart and New Braunfels.

We do not lecture. We go over tactics of power and control and ask the participants to document their use of the tactics. At first they sanitize their version of what happened.

It usually takes about six or seven weeks before they open up and try to change.

## **The groups teach pro-active alternative behaviors such as managing verbal confrontations, practical negotiation and peaceful conflict resolution skills.**

Peer leadership is very effective. Participants listen to each other better than to the two facilitators. Usually one facilitator challenges and one supports, and they often switch

these duties to keep the participants on their toes.

## **We need to strike a balance between being compassionate and requiring accountability.**

How do we know if the men are changing and not lying or manipulating us? We also offer a confidential women's support and empowerment group for their partners, and allow that the 24 weeks of classes can be shortened to 18 if their partners take at least 12 women's group sessions. We can get their perspective on their abuser's progress. 🌱



*You can hear Dr. Kotin (above) talk more about his work at the Caldwell County Family Violence Task Force Conference on October 24, 2014 in Lockhart. Email Bethany Kulp at [bkulp@hcwc.org](mailto:bkulp@hcwc.org) for a registration form and for more information.*